

Summary of Monitoring Changes
to
Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation
of the
Land and Resource Management Plan
Chippewa National Forest

The Chippewa National Forest is in the process of making changes to the Forest Plan monitoring program to comply with the Forest Service's 2012 Planning Rule. The Forest also took the opportunity to review our existing monitoring program and has proposed some changes. The following is a summary of the proposed changes that include new questions, questions that have been modified, and questions we propose to drop. In addition, a section is included that lists the questions from our existing monitoring program with no changes that we will continue to monitor. Chapter 4 of the Forest Plan, "Monitoring and Evaluation", Table-MON-4 (<http://www.fs.usda.gov/chippewa>) provides an updated listing of the proposed monitoring program.

New Questions

These questions were developed to address monitoring elements specified in the 2012 Planning Rule (36 CFR 219.12) that were not addressed in our existing monitoring program. They will be added to Forest Plan, Chapter 4 Monitoring and Evaluation.

Vegetation -- Ecological Conditions (element 3)

- To what extent is Forest management contributing to the maintenance and establishment of white pine in appropriate landscape ecosystems?

Recreation -- Visitor Use and Satisfaction (element 5)

- What is the status and trend of visitor use, visitor satisfaction, and progress toward meeting recreation objectives in the plan?

Climate Change (element 6)

- How is the frost free season changing across the plan area on an annual basis?

Modified questions

A number of monitoring questions in the existing program are proposed for modification. Several of the modifications are minor, i.e., dropped portions that did not apply to the Chippewa. Others, however, reflect a shift that is broader or more representative of the range of activities that occur on the Forest. For each of the resource areas, the modified question is listed first (solid bullet), followed by details on what was changed and the rationale for doing so. The modified questions would replace the questions currently in Chapter 4.

All

- How close are projected outputs and services to actual?
This question is dropped as a "stand alone" question but this is one of several questions listed under "All & Multiple Uses" resource area.

Public

Fire

- What treatment methods are used, and to what extent, to reduce hazardous fuel conditions, to meet ecological objectives, or to maintain desired vegetation conditions?
 - This replaces the original question: “How, where, and to what extent will prescribed fire be used to maintain desired fuel levels, and/or mimic natural processes, and/or maintain/ improve vegetation conditions, and/or restore natural processes and functions to ecosystems?” The modification is more inclusive in that it is a shift from a focus on prescribed fire only to other fire and fuel treatments used to meet Forest Plan objectives.
- What level of wildland fire occurs on the Forest's landscape?
 - This replaces the original question: "What level of wildland fire on the landscape is appropriate and desirable, and to what extent is unwanted wildland fire on the landscape suppressed? All unwanted fires on our Forest are suppressed so the latter part of that question is not meaningful. The new question is broader and includes all types of fire, both planned and unplanned ignitions, which presents a more complete picture of the types and extent of fire activity that occurs across the Forest.

Social & Economic Stability

- To what extent does output levels of timber harvest and mix of saw timber and pulpwood compare to those levels projected?
 - Drops "and location" from the original question which did not provide any useful information.

Special Uses

- Does Forest management of forest product, recreation, and other special use permits meet Forest Plan and agency direction?
 - “Recreation/wilderness” was changed to “recreation”. The Chippewa NF does not have any wilderness.

Tribal Rights and Interests

- Is Forest management helping to sustain American Indians' way of life, cultural integrity, social cohesion, and economic well-being? Is the Forest facilitating the right of the Tribes to hunt, fish, and gather as retained via treaty?
 - The second question is no longer a “stand alone” question. The second question was combined with the first question because they are complementary.

Vegetation Spatial Patterns

- To what extent is Forest management, natural disturbances, and subsequent recovery restoring vegetation spatial landscape patterns and moving conditions toward both short-term (1-15 years) and long-term (100 years) objectives at Landscape Ecosystem, Management Area, and other appropriate landscape scales?
 - The phrase “Spatial Zone (SNF)” which applies to the Superior NF was dropped from the original question.

Vegetation Spatial Patterns and Timber

- Where ecologically appropriate, to what extent have the acres and number of patches of temporary openings up to and including 1000 acres been increased?

Public

- This replaces the original question: "How much even-aged management (especially clear cutting) should be used, and in what forest types should it be used?" which was designed to address a 1982 Planning Rule requirement to determine if the maximum size limit (1000 acres) should be continued. Management activities on CNF since 2004 have not created even-aged blocks that are hundreds of acres in size. The focus of the question is shifted to evaluate the increase in size of temporary openings.

Wildlife

- Threatened and Endangered Species and Sensitive Species: To what extent is Forest management contributing to the conservation of threatened and endangered species and sensitive species and moving toward short term (10-15 years) and long-term (100 years) objectives for their habitat conditions?
 - TES: To what extent is Forest management contributing to the conservation of Threatened and endangered species and moving toward short term (10-15 years) and long-term (100 years) objectives for their habitat conditions?
 - The last portion of the original question ... "and population trends" was dropped. Emphasis has shifted to providing for ecological conditions.
 - Combines two questions that are essentially the same, one for TES and the other for sensitive species, into one question that addresses both groups of species. Monitoring indicators are the same for both groups.

Dropped Questions

The following monitoring questions the Forest proposes to drop from the existing monitoring program for a number of reasons. Some questions are vague and difficult to determine how to monitor, some the Forest lacked the capacity to monitor in terms of expertise and available funding, other questions are no longer relevant or provide useful information.

Air Quality

- To what extent is Forest management contributing or responding to air quality effects on ecosystems, human health or human enjoyment?

All

- How close are projected costs with actual costs?

Insects, Diseases, and Disturbances

- To what extent is Forest management managing undesirable occurrences of fire, insect and disease outbreaks?

Land Adjustment

- How successful is the Forest's land adjustment program in support and enhancement of Forest Plan desired conditions and objectives and contributing to efficient and effective stewardship?

Minerals

- Are mineral exploration, development and production avoidance or mitigation measures effective and being followed as recommended in project designs?

Public

OHV

- To what extent is the Forest providing OHV opportunities; what are the effects of OHV's on the physical and social environment; and how effective are forest management practices in managing OHV use?

Public Health and Hazardous Materials

- Does water in Forest-provided drinking water sources and swimming beaches meet standards of quality protective of human health and aesthetics?
- Does hazardous material storage on NF meet standards of quality protective of human health?
- Are Forest facilities and recreation sites safe for employee and public use and enjoyment?

Recreation

- To what extent are Forest management activities within the Recreation Opportunity Spectrum Objectives (ROS)?

Scenic Resources

- Are forest management activities providing scenic quality as defined by the Scenic Integrity Objectives (SIO)?

Social & Economic Stability

- To what extent does the Forest provide commodity resources and non-commodity opportunities in an environmentally acceptable manner that contribute to the social and economic sustainability and diversity of local communities?
- Are forest management activities maintaining the desired characteristics of the areas and species of interest (traditionally and culturally) as identified in research and/or by interested communities and individuals?

Vegetation Ecological Processes

- To what extent is Forest management maintaining or restoring conditions that result from or emulate natural ecological processes of fire, wind, flooding, and insects and disease outbreaks.

Wildlife

- What are the population trends of management indicator species?
- NNIS: To what extent is Forest management contributing or responding to populations of terrestrial or aquatic non-native species that threaten native ecosystems?
- To what extent is Forest management moving toward short term (10-15 years) and long-term (100 years) objectives for habitat conditions for management indicator species and species associated with management indicator habitats?

Additional information on the rationale for each question dropped is available upon request.

No changes to questions

The following questions are part of the Forest's existing monitoring program and will continue to be monitored.

Public

Cooperation

- To what extent does the Forest emphasize agency, tribal, and public involvement and inter-governmental coordination with federal, state, county governments and agencies?

Heritage Resources

- Are avoidance or mitigation measures effective and being followed as recommended in project designs? 2) Are heritage resources being affected in non-project areas?

Insects and Disease

- Are insect and diseases populations compatible with objectives for restoring or maintaining healthy forest conditions?

Landscape Ecosystems and Ecological Conditions

- To what extent is the Forest meeting vegetation composition and age class objectives for each of the Landscape Ecosystems?

Recreation

- To what extent do Forest recreation facilities and opportunities meet accessibility, health, safety, cost, and maintenance requirements and achieve resource and social objectives?
- To what extent is the Forest providing a range of motorized and non-motorized recreation opportunities that incorporate diverse public interests yet achieve applicable Management Area and landscape ecosystem objectives.

Soils

- Are the effects of Forest management, including prescriptions, resulting in significant changes to productivity of the land?

Timber

- Are harvested lands adequately restocked after five years?
- To what extent is Timber Management occurring on lands suitable for such production?

Transportation System

- To what extent is the Forest, in coordination with other public road agencies, providing safe, cost effective, minimum necessary road systems for administrative and public use.

Tribal Rights and Interests

- Are government to government relationships functional?

Vegetation

- To what extent is the Forest providing a full range of vegetative communities that address diverse public interests and needs while contributing to ecosystem sustainability and biological diversity?

Vegetation Composition & Structure

- To what extent are conditions moving toward short-term (1-20 years) and long-term (100 years) objectives at Landscape Ecosystem, Management Area, and other appropriate landscape scales?

Public

Watershed Health & Riparian

- To what extent is Forest management affecting water quality, quantity, flow timing and the physical features of aquatic, riparian, or wetland ecosystems?

Wildlife:

- TES: To what extent are road and trails closures effective in prohibiting unauthorized motor vehicle use?
- TES: To what extent is the Forest maintaining no net increase in groomed or designated over-the-snow trail routes unless the designation effectively consolidates use and improves lynx habitat through a net reduction of compacted snow areas?
- To what extent is Forest management providing ecological conditions to maintain viable populations of native and desired non-native species?

To comment

We invite your review and comments on the proposed changes to our monitoring program. We will accept comments for 30 days from February 5 to March 7, 2016. The Forest Supervisor will consider your comments prior to making any monitoring program changes. Final changes to the monitoring program will be prior to May 9, 2016 transition date specified in the 2012 Planning Rule. This action will not be subject to administrative review as it is considered an administrative change to the Forest Plan (36 CFR 219.13(c)) rather than a Plan Amendment.

Comments may be submitted to: comments-eastern-chippewa@fs.fed.us; mailed to Chippewa National Forest, 200 Ash Ave. NW, Cass Lake, Minnesota, 56633; or faxed to 218-335-8637 (Attn, Sharon Klinkhammer).

For more information, please contact Sharon Klinkhammer at 218-335-8660 or sklinkhammer@fs.fed.us.

Thank you for your interest in the Chippewa National Forest.